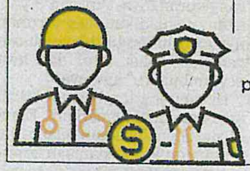
AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN
MUKA SURAT : 7
RUANGAN : NASIONAL

PAKEJ RANGSANGAN EKONOMI 20

Elaun khas kakitangan perubatan, doktor RM400

Bantuan kepada individu terkesan

Bayaran secara one-off sebanyak RM600 kepada pemandu teksi, pemandu bas persiaran dan pemandu pelancong dan penarik beca yang berdaftar



Elaun khas RM400 sebulan kepada doktor serta kakitangan perubatan dan RM200 kepada petugas imigresen dan kakitangan lain yang terbabit, berkuat kuasa Februari 2020 hingga COVID-19 berakhir

Penambahbaikan modal insan

Geran padanan RM100 juta disediakan kepada Pembangunan Sumber Manusia Bhd (HRDF) untuk membiayai tambahan 40,000 pekerja sektor pelancongan dan sektor lain yang terkesan.

Peruntukan RM50 juta untuk subsidi pembiayaan kursus jangka pendek digital dan berkemahiran tinggi

Sistem Insurans Pekerjaan (SIP) ditambah baik dengan kos latihan boleh dituntut ditingkatkan daripada RM4,000 kepada RM6,000

Kerajaan sedia peruntukan mencukupi kekang penularan COVID-19

Putrajaya: Kerajaan akan memberi elaun khas sebanyak RM400 sebulan kepada doktor serta kakitangan perubatan sebagai tanda penghargaan kepada petugas awam barisan hadapan dalam memerangi COVID-19.

Perdana Menteri interim, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, berkata elaun khas sebanyak RM200 juga akan diberikan kepada petugas imigresen dan kakitangan lain yang terbabit.

Selain itu, bayaran secara *one-off* sebanyak RM600 akan diberikan kepada pemandu teksi, pemandu bas persiaran dan pemandu pelancong serta penarik beca yang berdaftar.

"Bantuan elaun khas itu berkuat kuasa Februari 2020 hingga wabak ini berakhir.

"Sehingga ini, Kementerian Kesihatan sudah membelanjakan sebanyak RM150 juta bagi pembelian peralatan, ubat dan barangan guna pakai dalam usaha pengawalan penularan COVID-19," katanya.

Dr Mahathir berkata demikian dalam ucapan pakej rangsangan ekonomi 2020 bertema 'Memperkukuh Keyakinan, Merangsang Pertumbuhan, Melindungi Pekerjaan,' di sini, semalam.

Beliau berkata, melalui pakej rangsangan ekonomi itu kerajaan akan menyediakan peruntukan yang mencukupi bagi memastikan COVID-19 dapat diuruskan dengan baik dan terkawal.

Katanya, kerajaan juga menggalakkan majikan supaya menambah pelaburan dalam meningkatkan produktiviti modal insan pada ketika aktiviti ekonomi perlahan.

"Oleh itu, kerajaan akan menawarkan potongan berganda kepada perbelanjaan ke atas latihan bagi sektor pelancongan.

"Kerajaan juga akan menyediakan RM100 juta geran-padanan kepada Pembangunan Sumber Manusia Berhad (HRDF) untuk membiayai tambahan 40,000 pekerja daripada sektor pelancongan dan sektor lain yang terkesan," katanya.

Kerajaan seterusnya kata Dr Mahathir, memperuntukkan RM50 juta untuk subsidi pembiayaan kursus jangka pendek dalam bidang digital dan berkemahiran tinggi.

"Insentif ini dijangka memberi manfaat kepada 100,000 rakyat. Pekerja yang terjejas boleh bergantung kepada Sistem Insurans Pekerjaan (SIP) yang dananya kini berjumlah RM1.1 billion.

"Selain itu, SIP akan ditambah baik melalui kos latihan yang boleh dituntut ditingkatkan daripada RM4,000 kepada RM6,000. Sebagai tambahan, elaun latihan harian RM30 sehari juga disediakan kepada pelatih," katanya.

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN
MUKA SURAT : 14
RUANGAN : NASIONAL

Penularan COVID-19

Satu kes baharu, 2 dibenar pulang

Wanita tempatan pernah pergi ke Jepun sah positif virus

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Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah

Orang ramai diingat mengamalkan langkah pencegahan bagi mengelak penularan COVID-19. (Foto BERNAMA)

Putrajaya: Kementerian Kesihatan mengesahkan satu kes baharu positif coronavirus (COVID-19) dikesan semalam, membabitkan seorang wanita tempatan berusia 53 tahun yang mempunyai sejarah perjalanan ke Jepun.

Ketua Pengarah Kesihatan, Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah, berkata wanita berkenaan mempunyai gejala demam sehari selepas pulang dari negara berkenaan pada 23 Februari lalu, sebelum mendapatkan rawatan di sebuah hospital di Kuala Lumpur.

"Ujian pengesanan COVID-19 diambil bagi kes ini dan pesakit disahkan positif hari ini (semalam)," katanya dalam satu kenyataan di sini.

Beliau berkata, bagi dua kes individu yang sebelum ini dilaporkan positif iaitu kes ke-16 dan ke-20, masing-masing sudah dibenarkan pulang semalam.

"Kes ke-16 membabitkan wanita warga China berusia 67 tahun yang mendapat rawatan di Hospital Kuala Lumpur (HKL), manakala kes ke-20 seorang warga Amerika Syarikat yang mendapat rawatan di Hospital Sungai Buloh.

"Ini menjadikan jumlah keseluruhan individu yang sudah pulih sepenuhnya serta dibenarkan pulang sebanyak 22 kes," katanya.

Dalam perkembangan lain, Dr Noor Hisham memaklumkan sehingga semalam, seramai 1,569 individu sudah diambil sampel bagi pengesanan COVID-19, membabitkan pesakit di bawah pemantauan (PUI), kontak rapat, misi bantuan kemanusiaan dan penumpang kapal persiaran *Deam World*.

"Daripada jumlah ini, 23 kes disahkan positif COVID-19 dan 1,523 lagi negatif, manakala 23 lagi masih menunggu keputusan makmal," katanya.

Dr Noor Hisham menyarankan rakyat Malaysia menangguhkan perjalanan ke wilayah atau bandar yang diisytiharkan sebagai kawasan wabak COVID-19 di Republik Rakyat China seperti dimaklumkan sebelum ini, selain Korea Selatan, Jepun, Itali serta Iran.

"Orang ramai diingatkan mengamalkan langkah pencegahan khususnya semasa berada di negara berkenaan dan selepas pulang ke Malaysia.

"Sehingga hari ini, sejumlah 81,398 kes COVID-19 membabitkan 2,770 kematian dilaporkan di seluruh dunia. Daripada jumlah itu, empat peratus atau 3,200 kes dilaporkan di luar China yang membabitkan 52 kematian.

"Menerusi pemantauan dijalankan, didapati Korea Selatan, Jepun, Itali dan Iran menunjukkan peningkatan kes ketara dalam tempoh seminggu lalu," katanya.

COVID-19

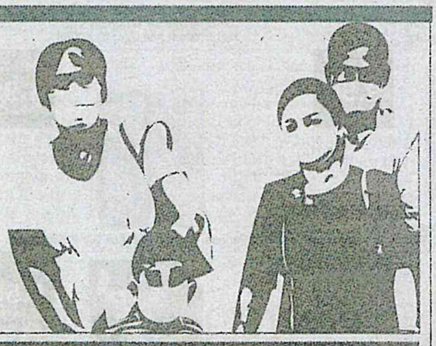
Jumlah keseluruhan kes
81,398

Jumlah kematian keseluruhan
2,770

Negara yang terbabit
45

Jumlah kes sembuh
30,377

Malaysia
20



Negara	Bilangan kes	Bilangan kematian
China	78,198	2,718
Korea Selatan	1,261	12
Itali	453	12
Jepun	189	2
Iran	139	19
Singapura	93	0
Amerika Syarikat	60	0
Thailand	40	0
Bahrain	33	0
Jerman	27	0
Kuwait	26	0
Australia	22	0
Malaysia	22	0
Perancis	18	2
Vieatnam	16	0
UAE	13	0
United Kingdom	13	0
Sepanyol	13	0
Kanada	11	0
Iraq	5	0
Oman	4	0
India	3	0
Filipina	3	1
Crotia	3	0
Finland	2	0
Russia	2	0
Sweden	2	0
Israel	2	0
Lubnan	2	0
Austria	2	0
Pakistan	2	0
Kemboja	1	0
Nepal	1	0
Sri Langka	1	0
Mesir	1	0
Belgium	1	0
Afganistan	1	0
Algeria	1	0
Switzerland	1	0
Macedonia Utara	1	0
Georgia	1	0
Romania	1	0
Brazil	1	0
Greece	1	0
Norway	1	0
Lain-lain	705	4

Di kemaskini jam 8.00 pagi, 27 Februari 2020

Sumber: CPRC Kebangsaan dan WHO Grafik BH

Hospital Medan Malaysia bantu kawal COVID-19 di Bangladesh

Kuala Lumpur: Pasukan perubatan di Hospital Medan Malaysia di Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, diberi kepercayaan untuk terbabit dengan perancangan mengawal penularan COVID-19, terutama membabitkan etnik Rohingya.

Komander Op Starlight 4, Kolonel Dr Shahril Nizam Abd Jalil, berkata pihaknya bekerjasama dengan pasukan kesihatan negara itu untuk membuat pemantauan dan mengambil langkah pencegahan yang perlu bagi mengawal penularan wabak berkenaan.

"Setakat ini, tiada kes COVID-19 di Cox's Bazar di Bangladesh, namun pasukan perubatan sentiasa bersedia dengan segala perancangan untuk mengawal wabak ini.

"Kita bekerjasama dengan pasukan kesihatan tempatan dan alhamdulillah setakat ini tiada kes," katanya kepada pemberita selepas majlis Kepulangan Tim Op Starlight 4 di Wisma Perwira di sini, semalam.

Sebelum ini, Panglima Angkatan Tentera Malaysia (ATM), Tan Sri Affendi Buang, dilapor berkata pengoperasian Hospital Medan Malaysia di Bangladesh akan dilanjutkan sehingga Disember 2021.

Affendi berkata, perkara berkenaan dipersetujui kerajaan kerana hospital itu mendapat pengiktirafan daripada Pertubuhan Kesihatan Sedunia (WHO) sebagai Hospital Medan Tahap 3 terbaik, terlengkap dan paling dipercayai di Cox's Bazar.

Hospital Medan Malaysia mula beroperasi pada hujung 2017 selepas berlaku kebanjiran lebih 700,000 pelarian Rohingya dari Myanmar ke Bangladesh akibat operasi berdarah tentera Myanmar di utara Rakhine.

Sehingga kini, Hospital Medan Malaysia sudah merawat lebih 97,000 pesakit dan melaksanakan lebih 3,520 pembedahan yang menyelamatkan ribuan nyawa rakyat di negara berkenaan.

BERNAMA

AKHBAR : BERITA HARIAN
MUKA SURAT : 61
RUANGAN : WANITA & KELUARGA

Reda hidap kanser bukan bererti menyerah kalah

Pesakit kena positif jalani rawatan kemoterapi, usah taasub bomoh

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Tunku Puan Sri Noor Hayati menyampaikan anugerah Tokoh Cekal KEDARA kepada Siti Fatimah pada majlis pelancaran KEDARA di Kota Bharu, baru-baru ini. (Foto ihsan Yayasan Noor Al-Syakur)

Kota Bharu: Sebilangan pesakit kanser payudara lambat datang untuk mendapatkan rawatan di hospital kerana takut menjalani pembedahan dan bimbang kehilangan aset berharga itu.

Malah, ramai juga pesakit berkenaan lebih gemar mendapatkan rawatan tradisional, terutama bomoh tempatan berbanding ke hospital kerana risau akan kehilangan 'mahkota wanita ini.

Yang nyata, memang kanser payudara antara penyakit paling digeruni dan menjadi penyebab utama kematian dalam kalangan wanita.

Sekiranya tidak dikesan dan dirawat dengan segera, sel kanser itu boleh merebak dengan pantas ke bahagian organ yang lain.

Menyedari hakikat ini, pelbagai kempen dianjurkan agensi kerajaan, swasta dan badan korporat bagi menyedarkan masyarakat terhadap kepentingan memeriksa tahap kesihatan, terutama payudara secara berskala.

Bagi guru dari Sekolah Kebangsaan (SK) Pangkal Meleret, Machang, Siti Fatimah Yusoff, 49, yang menderita kanser payudara, berkata reda dengan ketentuan ditakdirkan disahkan penyakit itu, namun tidak mahu menyerah kalah.

Katanya, sehingga kini beliau masih perlu menjalani sesi rawatan kemoterapi setiap tiga minggu sekali di Hospital Universiti Sains Malaysia (HUSM) Kubang Kerian sejak selepas disahkan didiagnosis kanser lima tahun lalu.

Katanya, sebagai penghidap kanser, rawatan kemoterapi dianggap sudah kalis dengan dirinya dan sehingga kini beliau menjalani rawatan kemoterapi yang memasuki kali ke-27 bagi mematikan sel kanser yang aktif dalam tubuh badannya.

"Di sebalik ujian menimpa diri, saya tetap berfikiran positif dan tidak pernah menunjukkan wajah sedih dan murung di hadapan orang ramai, terutama pelajar di sekolah.

"Kebiasaannya saya hanya akan memohon cuti sehari sahaja iaitu pada hari menjalani sesi rawatan kimoterapi dan pada keesokannya saya ke sekolah seperti sedia kala untuk meneruskan proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran (PnP) di sekolah.

"Jika sebelum ini, ketika kali pertama menjalani rawatan kemoterapi, saya mengalami alahan seperti berasa, letih, hilang selera makan, muntah, selain mengalami ulser yang sangat teruk kerana kesan ubat kemoterapi yang terlalu kuat, bagaimanapun, dengan sokongan suami dan anak-anak saya dapat melaluinya," katanya.

Beliau ditemui pemberita selepas majlis pelancaran Kelab Kanser Payudara (KEDARA) yang disempurnakan oleh Tengku Puan Temenggong Kelantan, Tunku Puan Sri Noor Hayati Almarhum Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, baru-baru ini.

Bercerita lanjut, ibu kepada enam anak yang berusia 8 hingga 24 tahun ini berkata, sebelum didiagnos menghidap penyakit berkenaan, terdapat ketulan bersaiz empat sentimeter (sm) yang dikesan dibahagian kiri buah dadanya.

Lantas pada September 2015, beliau mula menjalani rawatan kemoterapi untuk mematikan sel kanser.

"Apabila disahkan menghidap penyakit kanser saya menerimanya dengan hati yang tenang dan ia bukan penamat kehidupan.

"Sejak disahkan menghidap kanser payudara, saya sudah empat kali menjalani pembedahan membuang ketumbuhan di bahagian kiri payudara selain turut melalui 15 sesi rawatan radioterapi.

> *Jangan terlalu taasub dan percaya pada rawatan tradisional seperti bomoh yang kononnya boleh menyembuhkan penyakit kerana situasi ini akan menyebabkan penyakit kanser yang dihidapi semakin parah.*
>
> *Siti Fatimah Yusoff,*
> *Pesakit kanser payudara*

"Pada pada 2016 saya melakukan pembedahan mastektomi," katanya.

Beliau berkata, bagi mendapatkan kekuatan mental serta emosi beliau menyertai kumpulan sokongan KEDARA dan dari situ bertemu dengan ramai wanita yang berjaya meneruskan kehidupan dan melawan penyakit kanser sekali gus menguatkan lagi semangatnya untuk terus berjuang.

"Saya ingin menasihatkan sesiapa menghidapi kanser supaya segera mendapatkan rawatan di hospital kerana dengan kecanggihan teknologi perubatan dan rawatan saintifik pada masa kini dapat membantu merawat penyakit itu.

"Jangan terlalu taasub dan percaya pada rawatan tradisional seperti bomoh yang kononnya boleh menyembuhkan penyakit kerana situasi ini akan menyebabkan penyakit kanser yang dihidapi semakin parah," katanya.

Seorang lagi pesakit yang juga pejuang kanser, Mariani Mamat, 57, berkata apabila disahkan kanser ianya bukan bermaksud riwayat hidup kita sudah tamat kerana mati seseorang adalah ketentuan daripada Allah SWT.

"Saya disahkan menghidap kanser payudara pada April 2012. Walaupun ujian diberikan ini terlalu sukar untuk diharungi dan pada awalnya saya tidak sanggup memberitahu ahli keluarga kerana tidak mahu mereka bimbang.

"Sepanjang sakit, saya mendapatkan rawatan di hospital selain nasihat doktor pakar kerana yakin dengan kepakaran dan kecanggihan teknologi perubatan moden sekarang," katanya.

Beliau yang juga pesara guru berkata, ketika menjalani rawatan kemoterapi kali kedua, mengalami alahan yang teruk seperti muntah, cirit-birit, selain darah juga keluar melalui rongga kulit.

"Ada satu ketika, saya terpaksa menggunakan bantuan mesin pernafasan kerana terlalu penat kerana kanser sudah merebak ke bahagian usus sekali gus menyebabkan saya menjadi lemah.

"Pada waktu itu, saya beranggapan hidup sudah tidak lama, namun sebagai hamba-Nya saya sudah bersedia menerima takdir, tetapi sokongan suami, anak serta menantu membuatkan saya menjadi lebih kuat untuk melawan sakit ini," katanya.

Pesakit perlu sentiasa diberi motivasi, sokongan keluarga

Kota Bharu: Kebanyakan pesakit kanser payudara yang datang mendapatkan rawatan di hospital di Hospital Raja Perempuan Zainab II (HRPZ II), Kelantan terdiri daripada mereka yang berada pada tahap tiga dan empat.

Pakar Perunding Bedah Kanser Payudara dan Endokrin HRPZ II, Datuk Dr Imi Sairi Ab Hadi, berkata berdasarkan jangkaan pihaknya bagi pesakit pada tahap tiga dan empat jangka hayat mereka dalam tempoh lima tahun sahaja.

"Bagi pesakit berada pada tahap tiga peluang jangka hayat mereka hanya 50 peratus dan tahap empat pula antara 20 hingga 25 peratus sahaja," katanya.

Beliau yang juga, Pengasas dan Penasihat Kelab Kanser Payudara Kelantan (KEDARA) berkata, pesakit kanser payudara perlu diberikan motivasi dan sokongan, khususnya daripada ahli keluarga dan bukannya disisihkan.

"Sokongan ini penting supaya pesakit tidak berputus asa melawan penyakit, hidup dalam penuh kasih sayang dan dapat 'berjuang' sehingga ke hujung nyawa mereka.

"Bertepatan penubuhan KEDARA ini adalah bagi memastikan pesakit yang menderita kanser dapat mengharungi kehidupan dengan sokongan dan pada masa sama, mahu masyarakat sentiasa membantu penghidap kanser agar mereka bermotivasi.

"Sejak ditubuhkan pada Jun tahun lalu, KEDARA mempunyai 122 ahli dan 54 peratus daripadanya adalah penghidap kanser payudara tahap tiga dan empat," katanya.

> *Sokongan ini penting supaya pesakit tidak berputus asa melawan penyakit, hidup dalam penuh kasih sayang.*
>
> *Dr Imi Sairi Ab Hadi,*
> *Pakar Perunding Bedah Kanser Payudara dan Endokrin HRPZ II*

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO
MUKA SURAT : 10
RUANGAN : LOKAL

lokal

Elaun khas wabak Covid-19

Putrajaya: Kerajaan akan memberi elaun khas sebanyak RM400 sebulan kepada doktor serta kakitangan perubatan, dan RM200 kepada imigresen dan kakitangan lain yang terbabit.

Perdana Menteri Interim, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad berkata, bantuan elaun khas itu berkuat kuasa Februari 2020 hingga wabak Covid-19 berakhir.

"Sehingga ini, Kementerian Kesihatan membelanjakan sebanyak RM150 juta bagi pembelian peralatan, ubat dan barangan guna pakai dalam usaha mengawal wabak itu.

"Kerajaan akan menyediakan peruntukan yang mencukupi bagi memastikan wabak ini dapat diuruskan dengan baik dan terkawal," katanya pada pengumuman Pakej Rangsangan Ekonomi 2020.

Menurutnya, berikutan wabak Covid-19, sektor pelancongan juga turut terjejas yang menyebabkan kadar ketibaan pelancong berkurangan.

"Ini secara tidak langsung memberi impak negatif kepada pihak yang bergantung kepada industri pelancongan.

"Kerajaan akan memberikan bayaran secara sekali saja sebanyak RM600 kepada pemandu teksi, pemandu bas persiaran dan pemandu pelancong serta penarik beca berdaftar," katanya.

AKHBAR : HARIAN METRO
MUKA SURAT : 29
RUANGAN : LOKAL

Wanita balik dari Jepun dijangkiti

Kuala Lumpur: Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) mengesahkan satu lagi kes positif Coronavirus (Covid-19), semalam.

Ketua Pengarahnya Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah berkata, kes terbaharu itu membabitkan seorang wanita tempatan berusia 53 tahun.

"Wanita itu ada sejarah perjalanan ke Jepun baru-baru ini sebelum pulang ke Malaysia pada 23 Februari lalu.

"Sebaik pulang, pesakit menunjukkan gejala demam pada keesokan harinya dan mendapatkan rawatan di hospital di Kuala Lumpur sebelum disahkan positif," katanya dalam kenyataan media, semalam.

Dalam perkembangan sama, Dr Noor Hisham berkata, dua lagi kes individu positif Covid-19 sebelum ini sudah dibenarkan pulang, semalam.

AKHBAR : NEW STRAITS TIMES
MUKA SURAT : 2
RUANGAN : NEWS/ STORY OF THE DAY

NST LEADER

Viral ban

Saudi Arabia's way to keep Covid-19 out

DECEMBER-BORN Covid-19 is going places. And Saudi Arabia, which is Covid-19 free, is making sure that the novel coronavirus stays outside its borders. It has banned people from Covid-19-infected countries from entering the kingdom. Saudi Arabia's fear is that Covid-19 may turn into a global pandemic if restrictions on movement are not imposed. This is a valid fear, and the rest of the world should respect it. Prevention, as they say, is better than cure. What's more, the World Health Organisation's (WHO) statement on Wednesday does see the possibility of Covid-19 turning into a pandemic. Our global village of seven billion needs to bear this in mind. Close proximity is all that is needed for the virus to spread like wildfire.

Saudi's fear is backed by statistics, too. While the novel virus that began in Wuhan, China, is showing signs of a fizzle in the middle kingdom — up to Tuesday it reported only 10 cases — "there have been sudden increase of cases in Italy, Iran and the Republic of Korea", according to WHO. The virus is also crossing global borders, from Iran to Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait and Oman and from Italy to Algeria, Austria, Croatia, Germany, Spain and Switzerland. Umrah pilgrims may have reasons to worry. Every year, more than six million perform umrah. Pilgrims from Pakistan, Indonesia, India and Bangladesh are among the top five countries making the pilgrimage every year. Malaysian pilgrims are not far behind. By the kingdom's calculation, this number is set to rise to 30 million in 2030. In this sea of humanity, the danger of infection is just a sneeze away.

> *It would be irresponsible, and evil even, for a country to allow its infected citizens to travel to another country.*

WHO thinks we can win the fight, but only if we do the right things. What Saudi Arabia is doing by banning potential carriers of the virus from mixing and mingling there is one such thing, though this doesn't come with the WHO stamp. Other countries must help by containing the virus within their borders. It would be irresponsible, and evil even, for a country to allow its infected citizens to travel to another country. Malaysia knows this only too well having been hit by Wuhan visitors. Malaysia, which is one of the countries in the visa suspension list, will be well advised to stop people travelling there. Countries will do well to follow WHO's advice: every country needs to be ready to detect cases early, to isolate patients, trace contacts, provide quality clinical care, prevent hospital outbreaks and prevent community transmission. But this is after the fact. What Saudi Arabia is doing by keeping potential infection at bay may appear very drastic, but during emergencies — and Covid-19 is an emergency — has much sense behind it.

Potential pilgrims, too, must be responsible enough not to travel to Makkah and Medina if they display the symptoms of the disease. Or if they have come into contact with people who do have such symptoms. It must be remembered: Covid-19 takes 14 days to show up. Thermal equipment at exit and entry points may not be able to detect those infected. It is best to stay home, at least until the emergency passes. It will be irresponsible to take the virus elsewhere.

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NEWS / Story of the day

COVID-19 ECONOMIC RISKS

GOVT UNVEILS RM20 BILLION STIMULUS PACKAGE

It is anchored on mitigating impact of virus, spurring rakyat-centric growth and promoting quality investments, says Dr M

AYISY YUSOF
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MALAYSIA has unveiled a RM20 billion stimulus package to ensure the economic risks associated with the Covid-19 outbreak are effectively addressed.

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said various strategies had been formulated to ensure the economy was on strong foundations.

Highlights of the package include a six-month grace period, from April to September, on certain tax payments and a reduction in the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) employees' contribution to seven per cent from 11 per cent, from April until December.

The latter initiative could potentially unlock up to RM10 billion worth of private consumption, Dr Mahathir said.

The EPF contribution reduction is part of immediate measures to boost local consumption growth to cushion the effect of external factors while protecting local jobs.

The six-month grace period, meanwhile, covers, among others, deferment of monthly income tax instalment payments for businesses in the tourism sector, a 15 per cent discount in monthly electricity bills to hotels, travel agencies, airlines, shopping malls, conventions and exhibitions centre, exemption of Human Resource Development Fund levies for hotels and travel related companies, and exemption of the six per cent service tax for hotels.

"The stimulus package is anchored on three strategies — mitigating the impact of Covid-19, spurring rakyat-centric economic growth and promoting quality investments," Dr Mahathir said when unveiling the stimulus package yesterday.

Government staff directly involved in combating Covid-19 will get special monthly allowances beginning this month.

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RUANGAN : NEWS/ STORY OF THE DAY

Trishaw riders in Taman Syahbandar, Kuala Terengganu. The government will give a one-off payment of RM600 to taxi and tourist bus drivers, tourist guides and registered trishaw riders. FILE PIX

MITIGATING IMPACT OF COVID-19

The outbreak posed a significant impact on the global economy, including Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir said a three-pronged approach would be implemented to ease the cash flow of affected businesses, assist affected individuals and stimulate demand for travel and tourism.

The government would also provide financing for affected companies via Bank Negara Malaysia through a special relief facility worth RM2 billion, particularly for working capital for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with a 3.75 per cent interest rate.

Dr Mahathir said Bank Simpanan Nasional would allocate RM200 million in microcredit at a four per cent interest rate to affected businesses.

"The approval for existing loan funds will be further streamlined, such as Bank Pembangunan's Tourism Infrastructure Fund of RM1.5 billion."

He said all banks were required to provide financial relief in the form of payment moratorium comprising restructuring and rescheduling loans for affected businesses and individuals.

"The government also calls on industry players to play their part — for hotels to offer discounts and shopping malls to reduce rentals to their tenants.

"Malaysia Airport Holdings Bhd will also provide rebates on rental for premises at the airport as well as landing and parking charges."

The government would also give a one-off payment of RM600 to taxi and tourist bus drivers, tourist guides and registered trishaw riders.

For government staff directly involved in combating Covid-19, there would be special monthly allowances beginning February until the outbreak ends, which are:

RM400 for medical doctors and other medical personnel; and,

RM200 for immigration and related frontline staff.

To date, the Health Ministry has committed RM150 million to purchase equipment, medicine and consumables to contain the coronavirus outbreak.

SPURRING RAKYAT-CENTRIC ECONOMIC GROWTH

The government would provide double deduction on expenses incurred on approved tourism-related training and up to RM100 million on a matching grant to HRDF to fund an additional 40,000 employees in tourism and other affected sectors.

It would also provide RM50 million to subsidise short courses in digital skills and highly skilled courses.

This incentive is expected to benefit 100,000 Malaysians.

"Retrenched workers can rely on the Employment Insurance System (EIS) with current funds of RM1.1 billion," Dr Mahathir said.

"EIS will increase the claimable training cost from RM4,000 to RM6,000 for the affected sectors. A daily training allowance of RM30 per day will also be provided to trainees under EIS."

To stimulate the tourism industry, Dr Mahathir said the government would introduce personal income tax relief of up to RM1,000 on expenditure related to domestic tourism, an allocation of RM500 million for digital vouchers and tourism promotion, and the relaxation of existing guidelines limiting use of hotels by government agencies as part of mitigating the reduced demand.

A payment of RM200 to Bantuan Sara Hidup recipients scheduled for May will be brought forward to March with an additional RM100 to be paid to recipients in May.

Subsequently, an additional RM50 will be channelled in the form of e-tunai.

To enhance the income of rakyat and reduce the cost of living, the government will offer initiatives such as agrofood facility of RM1 billion via Bank Negara at an interest cost of 3.75 per cent to promote food production activities to meet domestic and export demands.

The others are:

A RM10 MILLION allocation to the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority for food storage facilities to reduce food prices;

RM1,000 grants to 10,000 local entrepreneurs to promote sale of their products on e-commerce platforms;

RM20 MILLION to the Malaysian Digital Economy Corp for the Perkhidmatan e-Dagang Setempat programme to transform Pusat Internet Desa into e-commerce hubs; and,

RM2 BILLION for the immediate implementation of small infrastructure repair and upgrading projects nationwide, especially in rural areas.

"The projects need to be implemented expeditiously to give positive impact in stimulating the economy," Dr Mahathir said, adding that the Finance Ministry would give a special relaxation on financial procedures for 2020 to expedite the implementation of all projects.

PROMOTING QUALITY INVESTMENTS

Dr Mahathir said agencies and government-linked companies (GLCs) would accelerate planned investment projects for 2020, which are:

THE Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change Ministry will open bids for 1,400MW of solar power generation. This is expected to involve RM5 billion of private investments and generate 25,000 jobs;

THE Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission will implement up to RM3 billion on works related to the National Fiberisation and Connectivity Plan;

GLCs, such as Tenaga Nasional Bhd, will invest RM13 billion in 2020, including accelerating projects such as LED street lights, transmission lines and rooftop solar installations;

PROMOTION of higher value-added private sector investments to enhance greater national competitiveness. This will be done through a co-investment fund of RM500 million to be co-invested and matched by private investors on a ratio of at least one to three. This will bring the total funds to RM2 billion for investment in early-stage and growth-stage Malaysian companies;

A WAIVER of the listing fees by the Securities Commission and Bursa Malaysia for one year for companies seeking listing on Leading Entrepreneur Accelerator Platform (LEAP) or Access, Certainty, Efficiency (ACE) markets, as well as companies with market capitalisation of less than RM500 million seeking listing on the Main Market;

BANK Negara Malaysia will provide an SME automation and digitalisation facility of RM300 million at an interest cost of 3.75 per cent; and,

THE government will provide accelerated capital allowances over a two-year period on expenses incurred on machinery and equipment, including ICT, tax deduction of up to RM300,000 on renovation and refurbishment cost, and import duty and sales tax exemption on import or local purchase of machinery and equipment used in port operations for three years from April.

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RUANGAN : NEWS/ NATION

CORONAVIRIUS OUTBREAK

MALAYSIA RECORDS 23RD COVID-19 CASE

Woman developed a fever upon returning from Japan on Feb 23

KUALA LUMPUR

MALAYSIA recorded a new Covid-19 case yesterday when a 53-year-old woman who had just returned from Japan tested positive for the virus.

The Health Ministry said the woman, who is the country's 23rd case, had returned from Japan on Feb 23 after which she developed a fever.

Health director-general Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said the woman sought treatment at a hospital in Kuala Lumpur.

"A subsequent Covid-19 test was done and she tested positive for the virus on Feb 27," he said, adding that the case was referred to the Crisis Preparedness and Response Centre.

He said two Covid-19 patients had made full recovery and had since been discharged from hospital. The duo are a 67-year-old Chinese national and an American woman, who was treated at Sungai Buloh Hospital. They are the country's 16th and 22nd Covid-19 cases, respectively.

Dr Noor Hisham said so far, 22 people had recovered from Covid-19.

Up to yesterday, the authorities collected samples from 1,569 people for Covid-19 testing.

Of this, 23 people tested positive, 1,523 tested negative, while the rest were awaiting lab test results.

Dr Noor Hisham also commented on the status of 66 Malaysians and their family members who were brought home from Wuhan, China, in a second humanitarian aid mission on Wednesday.

"Upon arrival, they underwent medical screening, and clinical samples were subjected to entry screening for Covid-19.

"All 66 people tested negative for Covid-19.

A mother and her child are among 66 people who were brought home from Wuhan, China, in a second humanitarian aid mission on Wednesday. BERNAMA PIC

"However, they have been placed at a quarantine centre for 14 days of medical observation."

He said up to yesterday, there were 81,398 registered Covid-19 cases worldwide, with 2,770 deaths. From that total, four per cent (3,200 cases) were outside China, with 52 deaths.

Observations, he said, showed a drastic rise in Covid-19 cases in South Korea, Japan, Italy and Iran in the past week.

He said given the current situation, the ministry advised Malaysians to postpone their travel plans to districts or cities in China that had been declared Covid-19 outbreak zones, as well as to South Korea, Japan, Italy and Iran.

AKHBAR : THE STAR
MUKA SURAT : 14
RUANGAN : NATION

M'sians urged to postpone umrah

Tour operators shocked by Saudi's decision to suspend pilgrimage visits

By MARTIN CARLVALHO
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PETALING JAYA: Malaysians are advised to postpone their trips to Saudi Arabia after the kingdom's move to temporarily stop accepting travellers for umrah pilgrimage and tourism over Covid-19 fears.

Wisma Putra said Saudi Arabia had temporarily suspended entry for umrah pilgrimage and visits to Al-Masjid an-Nabawi in Medina as part of its measures to prevent a Covid-19 outbreak.

Entry into the kingdom with a tourist visa from countries with confirmed Covid-19 cases according to criteria established by the Saudi Arabian health authorities had also been temporarily suspended, it said.

The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Kuala Lumpur said Malaysia, which had 22 confirmed Covid-19 cases, is among the countries affected by the suspension.

"The Saudi government stresses that the measures are temporary and subject to continuous evaluation by their authorities," said Wisma Putra in a statement yesterday.

It added that Wisma Putra, the Malaysian Embassy in Riyadh and the Malaysian Consulate General in Jeddah would continue to communicate with Saudi authorities to get more details on the implementation of the temporary suspension.

Malaysians in Saudi Arabia who need consular help are also advised to contact the Malaysian Embassy or the Malaysian Consulate General.

"Entry to the Kingdom with a tourist visa from countries with confirmed coronavirus outbreaks, according to criteria established by the Saudi health authorities, is temporarily suspended," Saudi's Foreign Ministry announced on Twitter.

Meanwhile, the Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents

(MATTA) has appealed to Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah to intervene.

"On behalf of Muslims in the country, we appeal to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong as the Head of Islam to hold discussions with Saudi Arabia's King Salman Abdulaziz al-Saud to reconsider the suspension for the good of the faithful worldwide.

"The suspension will prevent Muslims here from performing the pilgrimage and we hope the suspension is temporary and is lifted as soon as possible," its deputy president Mohd Akil Md Yusof said at a press conference.

He said the suspension came as a shock to tour operators and Muslims in Malaysia.

"There are five direct flights daily to Medina and Jeddah and from what we know, only one managed to get through just before the suspension came into effect," he added.

Mohd Akil said about 270,000 Malaysians performed the umrah every year and the suspension would affect about 100,000 who had registered to go this year.

It was reported that last year, more than seven million people from all over the world performed the umrah.

Flights carrying umrah pilgrims from Malaysia to Saudi Arabia were operating as usual as of 2pm yesterday.

Malaysian Association of Bumiputera Tours and Travel Agents deputy president Harun KC Ahmmu said information obtained from several travel and umrah agencies under the association revealed that pilgrims were still allowed to enter Saudi Arabia.

"Everything is still going on as usual and all pilgrims with visas are allowed to depart from the Kuala Lumpur International Airport," he said.

However, Harun claimed that the online umrah and visa registration system was blocked by the Saudi government yesterday.

"The registration system has been blocked since early morning. For pilgrims who have obtained visas, we do not know what the actual situation is.

"If the Malaysian pilgrim visa is suspended, many companies will be affected.

"We hope the Saudi government will find the best solution for this matter," he added.

AKHBAR : THE STAR
MUKA SURAT : 14
RUANGAN : NATION

23rd case of Covid-19 in Malaysia confirmed

PETALING JAYA: The Health Ministry has reported another new case of Covid-19 in the country, while declaring that two more patients had made a full recovery.

Health director-general Datuk Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah said the latest positive case – the 23rd one here – was a 53-year-old Malaysian female who travelled to Japan recently.

"After returning from Japan on Feb 23, the patient developed fever symptoms the following day and received treatment at a hospital in Kuala Lumpur.

"A Covid-19 test was done and it was found to be positive on Feb 27," he said in a statement yesterday.

He added that the two female patients who had recovered were discharged yesterday: a 67-year-old from China and an 83-year-old American. They were the 16th and 22nd confirmed cases respectively in Malaysia.

"Thus, a total of 22 people have fully recovered and have been discharged from the ward," he said.

He noted that up to yesterday, 1,569 individuals have had their samples taken for testing.

"From the total, 23 cases were Covid-19 positive, while 1,523 were negative and 23 cases are pending lab reports," he said.